

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 001450 TOSEC 250180

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SUBJECT: BALTSUN STORY ON VIETNAMESE GESTURES TO U.S.,
SATURDAY, JANUARY 3, 1976

FOR BARBIAN FROM S/PRS

1. FULL TEXT OF PAGE ONE STORY BY ARNOLD ISAACS FOLLOWS:
HEADLINE: VIETNAMESE OPENING DOOR TO TIES, TRADE WITH
U.S.

BEGIN TEXT:

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS, WHILE PREPARING TO REUNIFY
THEIR COUNTRY BETWEEN NOW AND MID-YEAR, ALSO ARE SENDING
OUT A FLURRY OF SIGNALS THAT THEY WOULD LIKE A POST-WAR
RECONCILIATION WITH THE U.S.

HANOI'S MOST RECENT GESTURE INDICATING WILLINGNESS
TO GO HALFWAY TOWARD A RAPPROCHMENT-OR PERHAPS EVEN A BIT
FARTHER THAN HALFWAY-CAME IN ITS OFFER TO RETURN THE BODIES
OF TWO U.S. MARINES KILLED BY COMMUNIST SHELLING BEFORE THE
FINAL AMERICAN EVACUATION OF SAIGON.

NGUYEN DUY TRINH, NORTH VIETNAM'S FOREIGN MINISTER,
MADE AN OFFER IN A LETTER TO SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
(D., MASS). HE ALSO EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT "THE ENDING OF
THE WAR AND THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA IN VIETNAM WILL

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 001450 TOSEC 250180

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BETTER PROMOTE THE BUILDING OF NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES."

MR. TRINH REITERATED NORTH VIETNAM'S VIEW THAT THE U.S. SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF VIETNAM AS PART OF THE NORMALIZATION.

THE TWO MARINES, CPL. CHARLES MC MAHON, OF WOBURN, MASS., AND LANCE CPL. DARWIN JUDGE, OF MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA, DIED BEFORE DAWN APRIL 29 AT TAN SON NHUT AIR BASE. IN THE CONFUSION OF THE FINAL EVACUATION, WHICH BEGAN LATER THAT DAY, THEIR BODIES ACCIDENTALLY WERE LEFT BEHIND.

IF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE RETURN THE MARINES' REMAINS, IT WOULD BE THE SECOND SUCH GESTURE IN A FEW WEEKS.

DECEMBER 21 OFFICIALS IN HANOI MARKED THE VISIT OF A U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION BY HANDING OVER THE BODIES OF THREE AMERICAN AIRMEN KILLED WHILE THE U.S. STILL WAS MILITARILY INVOLVED IN THE WAR.

EARLIER, AT THE END OF OCTOBER, THEY HAD FREED NINE AMERICANS CAPTURED IN MARCH AT THE OUTSET OF THE FINAL COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THE NINE - INCLUD-

ING TWO U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS--WERE THE LAST AMERICANS KNOWN TO BE HELD PRISONER IN VIETNAM.

THE U.S. HAS BEEN RESTINED SO FAR IN ITS RESPONSE TO HANOI'S SIGNALS. BOTH PRESIDENT FORD AND HENRY A. KISSINGER, THE SECRETARY OF STATE, HAVE SAID THE U.S. IS WILLING TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE RATHER THAN TO THE PAST IN RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. NORMALIZATION, MR. FORD SAID IN HONOLULU LAST MONTH, WILL DEPEND ON "THEIR CONDUCT TOWARD US."

THE U.S. WOULD LIKE A FULL ACCOUNTING OF APPROXIMATELY 800 AMERICAN SERVICEMEN STILL MISSING IN ACTION IN THE INDOCHINA WAR AND ANOTHER 1,300 WHO WERE KILLED, BUT WHOSE BODIES WERE NEVER RECOVERED.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 001450 TOSEC 250180

THE VIETNAMESE, FOR THEIR PART, HAVE INDICATED- IN TALKS WITH THE VISITING CONGRESSMEN AND IN OTHER PUBLIC A- AT THEY WOULD NOT ONLY AND PRIVATE COMMUNICATIONS THAT THEY WOULD LIKE NOT ONLY U.S. RECONSTRUCTION AID, BUT ALSO THE LIFTING OF THE AMERICAN TRADE EMBARGO SO THAT PRIVATE TRADE AND BUSINESS RELATIONS CAN BE ESTABLISHED.

THE RECONSTRUCTION FUNDS, HANOI BELIEVES, WERE PROMISED IN THE 1973 PARIS PEACE AGREEMENT.

AS FOR THE OTHER ECONOMIC RELATIONS, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE MADE CLEAR THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO DO BUSINESS WITH PRIVATE FIRMS FROM THE WEST--INCLUDING THE U.S.--WHEREVER THEY WILL BE USEFUL TO VIETNAM'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THEY ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN HIGH-TECHNOLOGY FIELDS SUCH AS OIL EXPLORATION, WHERE WESTERN METHODS ARE MORE ADVANCED THAN THOSE AVAILABLE FROM THE SOVIET UNION OR OTHER COMMUNIST NATIONS,

IN THEIR ATTITUDES ON PRIVATE BUSINESS, THE VIETNAMESE ARE FAR MORE PRAGMATIC THAN THEIR NEIGHBORS IN CHINA OR IN OTHER ASIAN COMMUNIST STATES. THE VIETNAMESE USUALLY TELL FOREIGN VISITORS THAT IF A DIVIDED VIETNAM COULD NOT BE SUBJUGATED BY HALF A MILLION AMERICAN TROOPS IN THE 1960'S, THEY ARE NOT WORRIED ABOUT A UNIFIED, SOCIALIST VIETNAM BEING DOMINATED OR SUBVERTED BY A FEW BUSINESSMEN IN THE 1970'S.

THOUGH THE DESIRE FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCE PLAYS A LARGE PART IN HANOI'S ENCOURAGEMENT OF DETENTE WITH THE AMERICANS, DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., ALSO WOULD BRING POLITICAL BENEFITS, HELPING SECURE THE INDEPENDENCE THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS HAVE ALWAYS PRIZED.

THE SOVIET UNION NOW IS HANOI'S CLOSEST ALLY. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE AND RUSSIANS HAVE GROWN PERCEPTIBLY CLOSER SINCE THE COMMUNIST VICTORY IN THE WAR LAST SPRING, AND A LARGE-SCALE RUSSIAN AID PROGRAM IS BEING CARRIED OUT.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 001450 TOSEC 250180

HOWEVER, STUDENTS OF VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AGREE THAT ESPECIALLY AFTER WINNING THEIR OWN LONG WAR OF LIBERATION, THE LEADERS IN HANOI WOULD NOT WILLINGLY ACCEPT SATELLITE STATUS, UNDER THE RUSSIANS OR ANYONE ELSE

AN AMERICAN PRESENCE, REDUCING VIETNAMESE DEPENDENCE OR SOVIET HELP, ALSO COULD OFFSET INFLUENCE AND ENABLE THE VIETNAMESE TO PURSUE MORE INDEPENDENT POLICIES.

IN RAISING THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN AID, THE VIETNAMESE HAVE ADOPTED A MARKEDLY MORE CONCILIATORY TONE THAN DURING THE WAR, WHEN THEY COMPLAINED BITTERLY THAT THE U.S. DENIAL OF FUNDS WAS A VIOLATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT.

AT THE TIME THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED, THE CONCEPT OF
AID TO THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS ENCOUNTERED STRONG

RESISTANCE IN THE U.S. CONGRESS, WHILE AN INITIAL AMERICAN
DELEGATION TO HANOI WAS UNABLE TO REACH ANY AGREEMENT ON
HOW TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.

LATER, AS THE FIGHTING CONTINUED DESPITE THE PARIS
CEASE-FIRE, THE AMERICANS TOOK THE POSITION THAT THEY
WOULD NOT GO AHEAD WITH THE AID PROPOSAL AS LONG AS THE
NORTH VIETNAMESE IN WASHINGTON'S VIEW, WERE VIOLATING
OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE PEACE PACT.

PRESUMABLY, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HOPE THAT WITH THE
WAR OVER AND THE AMERICAN CONTROVERSY OVER VIETNAM FINALLY
AT REST, THE QUESTION OF AID MIGHT BE MORE ACCEPTABLE TO
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CONGRESS.

IT IS UNCLEAR, FROM PUBLIC AMERICAN STATEMENTS SO FAR,
WHETHER THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WILL INSIST ON COMPLETION
OF THE MISSING-IN-ACTION AND KILLED-IN-ACTION ACCOUNTING
BEFORE ANY MOVE TO REVIVE THE AID QUESTION, OR WHETHER
MR. FORD MIGHT ACCEPT THE RECENT GESTURES AND MOVE AHEAD
ON AID AS PART OF A RECIPROCAL PROCESS.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 001450 TOSEC 250180

SOME OBSERVERS ALSO HAVE SPECULATED THAT THE U.S.
MIGHT WANT NORTH VIETNAM TO DROP THE ISSUE OF THE U.S.
SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT FLOWN TO THAILAND BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE
PILOTS DURING THE COLLAPSE OF THE SAIGON REGIME. NORTH
VIETNAM DEMANDED THE PLANES BE RETURNED, WHILE THE AMERICANS
AFTER RECOVERING MOST OF THOSE STILL IN FLYING CONDITION,
INSISTED THEY HAD A RIGHT TO KEEP THEM. INGERSOLL

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